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Epistle to Curio



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A N
E P I S T L E
T O
C U R I O.

*Neque tam ulciscendi causa dixi, quam ut & in præsens sceleratos
cives timore ab impugnanda patria detinerem; & in pos-
terum, documentum statuerem, nequis talem amentiam vellet
imitari.*

TULL.



L O N D O N :

Printed for R. DODSLEY at *Tully's-Head* in *Pall-mall*; and sold
by M. COOPER at the *Globe* in *Pater-noster-Row*.

M.D.CC.XLIV.



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ARGUMENT.

CAIUS SCRIBONIUS CURIO was a Roman Senator of great Spirit, Eloquence and Popularity. By Extract a Plebeian; but ennobled by the Offices his Family had sustain'd. His Education had form'd him to the most active Zeal for the legal Constitution of his Country, which he afterwards publicly exerted with great Applause under the Direction of CICERO, against the Insolence and Usurpations of the first Triumvirate. This Character he maintain'd even after the pernicious Designs of JULIUS CÆSAR began to appear. But at last, unhappily for himself and his Country, the Difficulties into which his ungovernable Passions had plung'd him, gave that artful Man an Opportunity of seducing him to betray the Cause of Liberty at its very Crisis. So that he is justly charg'd by the Roman Historians, as the chief Incendiary of CÆSAR's Ambition, and Author of all the public Ruin that ensued.



TO *CURIO.*



Thrice has the Spring beheld thy faded Fame,
And the fourth Winter rises on thy Shame,
Since I exulting grasp'd the votive Shell,
In Sounds of Triumph all thy Praise to tell ;
Blest could my Skill thro' Ages make thee shine, 5
And proud to mix my Memory with thine.
But now the Cause that wak'd my Song before,
With Praise, with Triumph crowns the Toil no more.
If to the glorious Man, whose faithful Cares,
Nor quell'd by Malice, nor relax'd by Years, 10
Had

Had aw'd Ambition's wild audacious Hate,
 And dragg'd at length Corruption to her Fate ;
 If every Tongue its large Applauses ow'd,
 And well-earn'd Laurels every Muse bestow'd,
 If public Justice urg'd the high Reward, 15
 And Freedom smil'd on the devoted Bard ;
 Say then, to him whose Levity or Lust
 Laid all a People's gen'rous Hopes in Dust ;
 Who taught Ambition firmer Heights of Pow'r,
 And fav'd Corruption at her hopeless Hour ; 20
 Does not each Tongue its Execrations owe ?
 Shall not each Muse a Wreath of Shame bestow ?
 And public Justice sanctify th' Award ?
 And Freedom's Hand protect th' impartial Bard ?

Yet long reluctant I forbore thy Name, 25
 Long watch'd thy Virtue like a dying Flame,
 Hung o'er each glimm'ring Spark with anxious Eyes,
 And wish'd and hop'd the Light again would rise.

But

But since thy Guilt still more intire appears,
 Since no Art hides, no Supposition clears ; 30
 Since vengeful Slander now too sinks her Blast,
 And the first Rage of Party-hate is past ;
 Calm as the Judge of Truth, at length I come
 To weigh thy Merits and pronounce thy Doom :
 So may my Trust from all Reproach be free, 35
 And Earth and Time confirm the fair Decree.

There are who say they view'd without Amaze
 The sad Reverse of all thy former Praise ;
 That thro' the Pageants of a Patriot's Name,
 They pierc'd the Foulness of thy secret Aim ; 40
 Or deem'd thy Arm exalted but to throw
 The public Thunder on a private Foe.
 But I, whose Soul consented to thy Cause,
 Who felt thy Genius stamp its own Applause,
 Who saw the Spirits of each glorious Age 45
 Move in thy Bosom and direct thy Rage ;

I scorn'd th' ungen'rous Glofs of flavish Minds,
 The Owl-ey'd Race, whom Virtue's Lustre blinds.
 Spite of the Learned in the Ways of Vice,
 And all who prove *that each Man has his Price*, 50
 I still believ'd thy End was just and free ;
 And yet, ev'n yet believe it ----- spite of thee.
 Ev'n tho' thy Mouth impure has dar'd disclaim,
 Urg'd by the wretched Impotence of Shame,
 Whatever filial Cares thy Zeal had paid 55
 To Laws infirm and Liberty decay'd ;
 Has begg'd Ambition to forgive the Show ;
 Has told Corruption thou wert ne'er her Foe ;
 Has boasted in thy Country's awful Ear,
 Her gross Delusion when she held thee dear ; 60
 How tame she follow'd thy tempestuous Call,
 And heard thy pompous Tales, and trusted all-----
 Rise from your sad Abodes, ye Curst of old
 For Laws subverted and for Cities fold !

Paint all the noblest Trophies of your Guilt, 65
 The Oaths you perjur'd and the Blood you spilt ;
 Yet must you one untempted Vileness own,
 One dreadful Palm reserv'd for him alone ;
 With studied Arts his Country's Praise to spurn,
 To beg the Infamy he did not earn, 70
 To challenge Hate when Honour was his Due,
 And plead his Crimes where all his Virtue knew.

Do Robes of State the guarded Heart inclose
 From each fair Feeling human Nature knows ?
 Can pompous Titles stun th' enchanted Ear 75
 To all that Reason, all that Sense would hear ?
 Else could'st thou e'er desert thy sacred Post,
 In such unthankful Baseness to be lost ?
 Else could'st thou wed the Emptiness of Vice,
 And yield thy Glories at an Idiot's Price ? 80

When they who loud for Liberty and Laws,
 In doubtful Times had fought their Country's Cause,
 When now of Conquest and Dominion sure,
 They fought alone to hold their Fruits secure;
 When taught by these, Oppression hid the Face 85
 To leave Corruption stronger in her Place,
 By silent Spells to work the public Fate,
 And taint the Vitals of the passive State,
 Till healing Wisdom should avail no more,
 And Freedom loathe to tread the poison'd Shore; 90
 Then, like some guardian God that flies to save
 The weary Pilgrim from an instant Grave,
 Whom sleeping and secure, the guileful Snake
 Steals near and nearer thro' the peaceful Brake;
 Then CURIO rose to ward the public Woe, 95
 To wake the Heedless and incite the Slow,
 Against Corruption Liberty to arm,
 And quell th' Enchantress by a mightier Charm.

Swift o'er the Land the fair Contagion flew,
 And with thy Country's Hopes thy Honours grew. 100
 Thee, Patriot, the Patrician Roof confess'd ;
 Thy pow'rful Voice the rescued Merchant blest'd ;
 Of thee with Awe the rural Hearth resounds ;
 The Bowl to thee the grateful Sailor crowns ;
 Touch'd in the fighting Shade with manlier Fires, 105
 To trace thy Steps the love-sick Youth aspires ;
 The learn'd Recluse, who oft amaz'd had read
 Of *Græcian* Heroes, *Roman* Patriots dead,
 With new Amazement hears a living Name
 Pretend to share in such forgotten Fame ; 110
 And he who, scorning Courts and Courtly Ways,
 Left the tame Track of these dejected Days,
 The Life of nobler Ages to renew
 In Virtues sacred from a Monarch's View,
 Rouz'd by thy Labours from the blest Retreat, 115
 Where social Ease and public Passions meet,

Again

Again ascending treads the civil Scene,
To *act* and be a *Man*, as thou had'st been.

Thus by Degrees thy Cause superior grew,
And the great End appear'd at last in view : 120
We heard the People in thy Hopes rejoice ;
We saw the Senate bending to thy Voice ;
The Friends of Freedom hail'd th' approaching Reign
Of Laws for which our Fathers bled in vain ;
While venal Faction, struck with new Dismay, 125
Shrunk at their Frown, and self-abandon'd lay.
Wak'd in the Shock, the PUBLIC GENIUS rose,
Abash'd and keener from his long Repose ;
Sublime in ancient Pride, he rais'd the Spear
Which Slaves and Tyrants long were wont to fear : 130
The City felt his Call : From Man to Man,
From Street to Street the glorious Horror ran ;
Each crouded Haunt was stirr'd beneath his Pow'r,
And murmuring challeng'd the deciding Hour.

Lo !

Lo ! the deciding Hour at last appears ; 135
 The Hour of every Freeman's Hopes and Fears !
 Thou, Genius ! Guardian of the *Roman* Name,
 O ever prompt tyrannic Rage to tame !
 Instruct the mighty Moments as they roll,
 And guide each Movement steady to the Goal. 140
 Ye Spirits, by whose providential Art
 Succeeding Motives turn the changeful Heart,
 Keep, keep the best in View to CURIO's Mind,
 And watch his Fancy and his Passions bind !
 Ye Shades immortal, who, by Freedom led, 145
 Or in the Field or on the Scaffold bled,
 Bend from your radiant Seats a joyful Eye,
 And view the Crown of all your Labours nigh.
 See Freedom mounting her eternal Throne !
 The Sword submitted and the Laws her own : 150
 See ! public Pow'r chastiz'd beneath her stands,
 With Eyes intent and uncorrupted Hands :

See private Life by wisest Arts reclaim'd !
 See ardent Youth to noblest Manners fram'd !
 See us acquire whate'er was fought by You, 155
 If CURIO, only CURIO will be true.

'Twas then----O Shame ! O Trust, how ill repaid !
 O *Latium* oft by faithless Sons betray'd !-----
 'Twas then ----- What Frenzy on thy Reason stole ?
 What Spells unfinew'd thy determin'd Soul ? 160
 -----Is this the Man in Freedom's Cause approv'd ?
 The Man so great, so honour'd, so belov'd ?
This patient Slave by Tinsel Chains allur'd ?
This wretched Suitor for a Boon abjur'd ?
This CURIO hated and despis'd by all ? 165
 Who fell himself, to work his Country's Fall ?

O lost alike to Action and Repose !
 Unown'd, unpitied in the worst of Woes !
 With all that conscious, undissembled Pride,
 Sold to the Insults of a Foe defy'd ! 170

With all that Habit of familiar Fame,
 Doom'd to exhaust the Dregs of Life in Shame !
 The sole sad Refuge of thy baffled Art,
 To act a Statesman's dull, exploded Part,
 Renounce the Praise no longer in thy Pow'r, 175
 Display thy Virtue tho' without a Dow'r,
 Contemn the giddy Crowd, the vulgar Wind,
 And shut thy Eyes that others may be blind.

----- Forgive me, *Romans*, that I bear to smile
 When shameless Mouths your Majesty defile, 180
 Paint you a thoughtless, frantic, headlong Crew,
 And cast their own Impieties on you.

For witness, Freedom, to whose sacred Pow'r
 My Soul was vow'd from Reason's earliest Hour,
 How have I stood exulting to survey 185
 My Country's Virtues opening in thy Ray !
 How, with the Sons of every foreign Shore
 The more I match'd them, honour'd hers the more !

O Race erect ! whose native Strength of Soul,
 Which Kings, nor Priests, nor fardid Laws controul, 190
 Bursts the tame Round of animal Affairs,
 And seeks a nobler Center for its Cares ;
 Intent the Laws of Life to comprehend,
 And fix Dominion's Limits by its End.
 Who bold and equal in their Love or Hate, 195
 By conscious Reason judging every State,
 The *Man* forget not, tho' in Rags he lies,
 And know the *Mortal* thro' a Crown's Disguise :
 Thence prompt alike with witty Scorn to view
 Fastidious Grandeur lift his solemn Brow, 200
 Or all awake at Pity's soft Command,
 Bend the mild Ear and stretch the gracious Hand :
 Thence large of Heart, from Envy far remov'd,
 When public Toils to Virtue stand approv'd,
 Not the young Lover fonder to admire, 205
 Nor more indulgent the delighted Sire ;
 Yet

Yet high and jealous of their freeborn Name,
 Fierce as the Flight of *Jove's* destroying Flame,
 Where'er Oppression works her wanton Sway,
 Proud to confront and dreadful to repay. 210
 But if to purchase CURIO's fage Applause,
 My Country must with him renounce her Cause,
 Quit with a Slave the Path a Patriot trod,
 Bow the meek Knee and kiss the regal Rod;
 Then still, ye Pow'rs, instruct his Tongue to rail, 215
 Nor let his Zeal, nor let his Subject fail:
 Else ere he change the Style, bear me away
 To where the *Gracchi*, where the *Bruti* stay!

O long rever'd and late resign'd to Shame!
 If this uncourtly Page thy Notice claim 220

Ver. 218.] The two Brothers, Tiberius and Caius Gracchus lost their Lives in attempting to introduce the only Regulation that could give Stability and good Order to the Roman Republic.

L. Jun. Brutus founded the Commonwealth, and died in its Defence.

When

When the loud Cares of Bus'ness are withdrawn,
 Nor well-drest Beggars round thy Footsteps fawn ;
 In that still, thoughtful, solitary Hour,
 When Truth exerts her unresisted Pow'r,
 Breaks the false Optics ting'd with Fortune's Glare, 225
 Unlocks the Breast and lays the Passions bare ;
 Then turn thy Eyes on that important Scene,
 And ask thyself-----if all be well within.

Where is the Heart-felt Worth and Weight of Soul,
 Which Labour cou'd not stop, nor Fear controul? 230
 Where the known Dignity, the Stamp of Awe,
 Which, half abash'd, the Proud and Venal saw?
 Where the calm Triumphs of an honest Cause?
 Where the delightful Taste of just Applause?
 Where the strong Reason, the commanding Tongue, 235
 On which the Senate fir'd or trembling hung?
 All vanish'd, all are fold-----And in their Room,
 Couch'd in thy Bosom's deep, distracted Gloom,

See

See the pale Form of barb'rous Grandeur dwell,
 Like some grim Idol in a Sorc'rer's Cell ! 240
 To her in Chains thy Dignity was led ;
 At her polluted Shrine thy Honour bled ;
 With blasted Weeds thy awful Brow she crown'd,
 Thy pow'ful Tongue with poison'd Philters bound,
 That baffled Reason straight indignant flew, 245
 And fair Persuasion from her Seat withdrew :
 For now no longer Truth supports thy Cause ;
 No longer Glory prompts thee to Applause ;
 No longer Virtue breathing in thy Breast,
 With all her conscious Majesty confest, 250
 Still bright and brighter wakes th' almighty Flame
 To rouse the Feeble and the Wilful tame,
 And where she sees the catching Glimpses roll,
 Spreads the strong Blaze and all involves the Soul ;
 But cold Restraints thy conscious Fancy chill, 255
 And formal Passions mock thy struggling Will ;

Or

Or if thy Genius e'er forget his Chain,
 And reach impatient at a nobler Strain,
 Soon the sad Bodings of contemptuous Mirth
 Shoot thro' thy Breast and stab the generous Birth, 260
 Till blind with Smart, from Truth to Frenzy tost,
 And all the Tenour of thy Reason lost,
 Perhaps thy Anguish drains a real Tear ;
 While some with Pity, some with Laughter hear.
 -----Can Art, alas! or Genius guide the Head, 265
 Where Truth and Freedom from the Heart are fled?
 Can lesser Wheels repeat their native Stroke,
 When the prime Function of the Soul is broke?

But come, unhappy Man! thy Fates impend ;
 Come, quit thy Friends, if yet thou hast a Friend ; 270
 Turn from the poor Rewards of Guilt like thine,
 Renounce thy Titles and thy Robes resign ;
 For see the Hand of Destiny display'd
 To shut thee from the Joys thou hast betray'd!

See the dire Fane of INFAMY arise ! 275

Dark as the Grave, and spacious as the Skies ;

Where from the first of Time, thy kindred Train,

The Chiefs and Princes of th' Unjust remain.

Eternal Barriers guard the pathless Road

To warn the Wand'rer of the curst Abode ; 280

But prone as Whirlwinds scour the passive Sky,

The Heights surmounted, down the Steep they fly.

There black with Frowns, relentless TIME awaits,

And goads their Footsteps to the guilty Gates ;

And still he asks them of their unknown Aims, 285

Evolves their Secrets and their Guilt proclaims ;

And still his Hands despoil them on the Road

Of each vain Wreath by lying Bards bestow'd,

Break their proud Marbles, crush their festal Cars,

And rend the lawless Trophies of their Wars. 290

At last the Gates his potent Voice obey ;

Fierce to their dark Abode he drives his Prey,

Where

Where ever arm'd with adamantine Chains,
 The watchful Dæmon o'er her Vassals reigns,
 O'er mighty Names and Giant-Pow'rs of Lust, 295
 The *Great*, the *Sage*, the *Happy* and *August*.
 No Gleam of Hope their baleful Mansion cheers,
 No Sound of Honour hails their unblest Ears;
 But dire Reproaches from the Friend betray'd,
 The childless Sire and violated Maid; 300
 But vengeful Vows for guardian Laws effac'd,
 From Towns inflav'd and Continents laid waste;
 But long Posterity's united Groan,
 And the sad Charge of Horrors not their own,
 For ever thro' the trembling Space resound, 305
 And sink each impious Forehead to the Ground.

Ye mighty Foes of Liberty and Rest,
 Give Way, do Homage to a mightier Guest!

Ver. 296.] Titles which have been generally ascrib'd to the most pernicious of Men.

Ye

Ye daring Spirits of the *Roman* Race,
 See CURIO's Toil your proudest Claims efface! 310
 -----Aw'd at the Name, fierce *Appius* rising bends,
 And hardy *Cinna* from his Throne attends :
 "He comes," they cry, "to whom the Fates assign'd
 "With furer Arts to work what we design'd,
 "From Year to Year the stubborn Herd to sway, 315
 "Mouth all their Wrongs, and all their Rage obey ;
 "Till own'd their Guide and trusted with their Pow'r,
 "He mock'd their Hopes in one decisive Hour ;
 "Then tir'd and yielding, led them to the Chain,
 "And quench'd the Spirit we provok'd in vain." 320

But thou, Supreme, by whose eternal Hands
 Fair Liberty's heroic Empire stands ;
 Whose Thunders the rebellious Deep controul,
 And quell the Triumphs of the Traitor's Soul,

Ver. 311, 312.] Appius Claudius the Decemvir and L. Cornelius Cinna both attempted to establish a tyrannical Dominion in Rome, and both perish'd by the Treason.

D

O turn

O turn this dreadful Omen far away ! 325
 On Freedom's Foes their own Attempts repay ;
 Relume her sacred Fire so near supprest,
 And fix her Shrine in every *Roman* Breast.
 Tho' bold Corruption boast around the Land,
 " Let Virtue, if she can, my Baits withstand !" 330
 Tho' bolder now she urge th' accursed Claim,
 Gay with her Trophies rais'd on CURI O's Shame ;
 Yet some there are who scorn her impious Mirth,
 Who know what Conscience and a Heart are worth.
 ----- O Friend and Father of the Human Mind, 335
 Whose Art for noblest Ends our Frame design'd !
 If I, tho' fated to the studious Shade
 Which Party-strife nor anxious Pow'r invade,
 If I aspire in public Virtue's Cause,
 To guide the Muses by sublimer Laws, 340
 Do thou her own Authority impart,
 And give my Numbers Entrance to the Heart.

Perhaps

Perhaps the Verſe might rouse her ſmother'd Flame,
 And ſnatch the fainting Patriot back to Fame ;
 Perhaps by worthy Thoughts of human Kind, 345
 To worthy Deeds exalt the conſcious Mind ;
 Or daſh Corruption in her proud Career,
 And teach her Slaves that Vice was born to fear.

F I N I S.



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